

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A fuel filter suitable for filtering diesel fuel comprising:

- 5 - a filter housing comprising a filter head and a housing enclosure, a fuel inlet and a fuel outlet arranged on the filter housing, and a water accumulation chamber which communicates with a water outlet provided in the housing enclosure,
- 10 - a cylindrical filter element installed in the filter housing such that an unfiltered side of the filter which communicates with the fuel inlet is sealingly separated from a filtered side of the filter which communicates with the fuel outlet,
- 15 - a water discharge valve at said water outlet, with an actuator for opening the water discharge valve from outside the filter,
- wherein said actuator is connected to the filter head on the one hand and the water outlet on the other hand.

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2. A fuel filter according to claim 1, further comprising a water sensor arranged in the filter housing.

25 3. A fuel filter according to claim 1, wherein said actuator extends through a filter interior formed by the cylindrical filter element.

4. A fuel filter according to claim 1, wherein axial displacement of the actuator opens the water outlet.

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5. A fuel filter according to claim 4, wherein the water outlet is opened by pulling on the actuator.

6. A fuel filter according to claim 4, further comprising a drive unit for moving said actuator.

5 7. A fuel filter according to claim 1, further comprising means for arresting said actuator to prevent unintended opening of the discharge valve.

10 8. A fuel filter according to claim 2, wherein the water sensor is connected to a control unit, which in turn is connected to a drive unit for said actuator, such that the actuator is actuated and the discharge valve opened automatically to release water from the filter housing when the water sensor senses that a predetermined amount of water has accumulated in the water accumulation chamber.